

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1859

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT ELAB TS
SUBJECT: UGTT CONGRESS

1. WITH THE SCHEDULED OPENING OF THE GENERAL UNION OF TUNISIAN WORKERS (UGTT) GUADRENNIAL CONGRESS ONE WEEK AWAY, THIS MAJOR TRADE UNION EVENT IS SHIPING UP AS A TOUR DE FORCE FOR HABIB ACHOUR. 800 UOTT DELEGATES ARE LIKELY TO REELECT ACHOUR TO ANOTHER FOUR YEAR TERM AS UGTT SECRETARY GENERAL AND GIVE HIS POLICIES IN RUNNING TUNISIA'S SOLE TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION FULL BACKING. AT THE SAME TIME, ACHOUR'S GROWING POLITICAL STATURE WILL PROBABLY BE FURTHER ENHANCED AS HE BASKS IN THE GLOW OF ADULATION FROM TUNISIA'S LARGEST MASS ORGANIZATION AND HE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CLEAN ELEMENTS OUT OF THE UGTT LEADERSHIP THAT HE CONSIDERS TO HAVE DIVIDED LOYALTIES.

2. THE PRINCIPAL ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED AT THE CONGRESS WILL BE ACHOUR'S MANAGEMENT OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. HE MAY COME IN FOR CRITICISM FROM LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE MOVEMENT FOR HIS HANDLING OF ILLEGAL STRIKES. ATTACKS WOULD FOCUS ON HIS TENDENCY TO ENFORCE DISCIPLINE AND COMPLY WITH GOT DESIRE TO KEEP STRIKES UNDER CONTROL BY EJECTING TROUBLESOME (AND LEFTIST) LESDERS FROM THE ORGANIZATION. ACHOUR MAY ALSO BE CRITICIZED FOR LENDING
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THE UGTT'S FULL SUPPORT TO GOT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLCY BY SIGNING THE FIVE-YEAR SOCIAL COMPACT ON JANUARY 19 (SEE TUNIS 0517). OTHERWISE, ACHOUR IS LIKELY TO HAVE CLEAR SAILING AT CONGRESS. HE WILL PARADE NUMEROUS FOREIGN VISITORS IN FRONT OF CONGRESS AS EVIDENCE OF HIS HIGH STATURE IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNIION CIRCLES, AND HE WILL BOAST OF HIS RECORD ON BEHALF OF THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE IN THE

HE
ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE.

3. ACHOUR IS TELLING TUNISIAN POLITICAL FIGURES THAT THE UGTT CONGRESS WILL NOT BE LIKE ANY DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY AFFAIRS OR LIKE TRADE UNION CONVENTIONS IN THE REST OF AFRICA AND THE ARAB WORLD. IT WILL BE FREE, HE SAYS, "JUST LIKE GEORGE MEANY'S CONVENTIONS." WHILE IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT THE UGTT IS THE MOST OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC MASS INSTITUTION IN TUNISIA, ACHOUR IS NO DOUBT CONFIDENT OF THE OUTCOME OF THE MARCH 24-27 CONGRESS AND SURE THAT THE UGTT'S TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY WILL NOT BACKFIRE ON HIM. IF HE ACHIEVES ALL THAT HE HOPES FOR, HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE A SUCCESSFUL CONGRESS AS ADDITIONAL PROOF OF HIS CONTENTION THAT HE IS THE ONLY MAN, APART FROM BOURGUIBA, WHO HAS A MASS POPULAR FOLLOWING IN TUNISIA AND THAT POLITICAL FIGURES WHO LOOK TO THE PSD FOR POLITICAL POWER ARE WEAKER THAN HE.

4. ACHOUR TOLD US THAT HE EXPECTS FOREIGN TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES FROM ABOUT 15 AFRICAN COUNTRIES, MOST OF THE ARAB WORLD, AND FROM "ALL" WESTERN EUROPE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT COMMUNIST COUNTRIES HAVE PRESSURED HIM TO EXTEND INVITATIONS TO THEIR TRADE UNION GROUPS AND HE EXPECTS DELEGATIONS FROM YUGOSLAVIA, ROMANIA AND THE SOVIET UNION.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: ACHOUR ALSO SAID HE HAD INVITED AFL-CIO TO SEND HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION TO UGTT CONGRESS. HE ATTENDED THE

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AFL-CIO CONVENTION IN SAN FRANCISCO IN OCTOBER 1975 AND HAD HOPED THAT HIS VISIT WOULD BE RECIPROCATED BY AMERICAN TRADE UNIONISTS. ACHOUR EXPECTS IRVING BROWN AND PAT O'FARRELL TO ATTEND CONGRESS NEXT WEEK BUT HAS NOT YET RECEIVED REPLY FROM AFL-CIO INDICATING WHETHER OR NOT HIS INVITATION WILL BE ACCEPTED. REQUEST DEPARTMENT DISCUSS THIS POINT WITH AFL-CIO TO DETERMINE IF IT PLANS TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE, AS ACHOUR HOPES. IN ANY EVENT AN EARLY RESPONSE TO INVITATION WOULD BE APPRECIATED BY UGTT LEADERSHIP CHARGED WITH ORGANIZING CONGRESS.
MULCAHY

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